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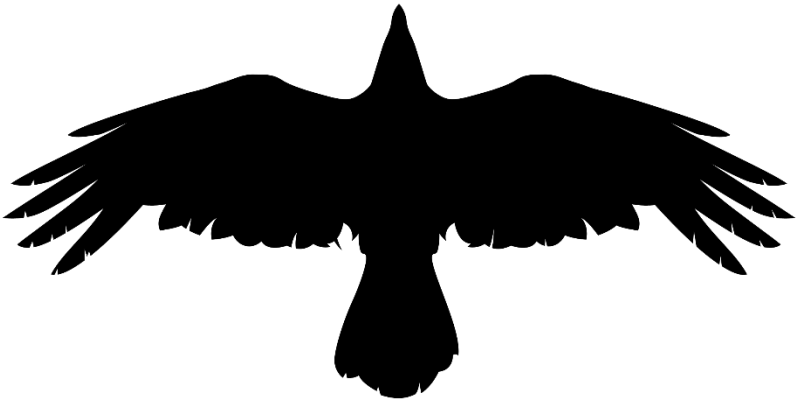

Hack

Beyond the Sphere of Influence

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Our thoughts, preferences and ideas are suggested, our minds moulded, our tastes formed largely by individuals we have never heard of. This is the logical result of the way in which our society is organised. Immense number of people must collaborate in this manner if they are to live together as a functioning society . . . or so they say.

As H.G Wells stated, "Modern means of communication, the power afforded by print, telephone, wireless and so forth rapidly putting through strategic and technical directive to a great number of cooperating centres, getting quick replies and effective discussion have opened up a new world of political processes. Ideas and phrases can now be given an effectiveness greater than the effectiveness of any personality and stronger than any sectional interest. The common design can be documented and sustained against perversion and betrayal. It can be elaborated and developed steadily and widely without personal, local and sectional misunderstanding."

The invisible interlinking structure of groupings, creating classes, alliances and associations is the mechanism by which democracy has organised its "public opinion" for its citizens. Simplified its collective thinking and the ways to influence this collective.

Holy Propaganda

Technically the first well established and documented Propaganda college was in Rome, founded by Pope Urban VIII in 1627 under the name "Pontificio Collegio Urbano de Propaganda Fide".
Their philosophy was simple, the truth is mighty and must prevail, and its everyone's duty to disseminate that truth. This can easily become ferocious and reproachful when its authors consciously and deliberately disseminate what they know to be lies.

Removing all the perceived negative notations, and in its simplest and purist forms this is what propaganda is all about.
A trivial group of propagandists can make the rest of us think what they please about a given subject. In reality, there are proponents and opponents of every propaganda, both of whom are equally eager to convince the majority.

REGOLE
DA OSSERVARSI DAGLI ALVNNI
DEL COLLEGIO
VRBANO
DE PROPAGANDA
FIDE.
IN ROMA,
Nella Stampa della Sac. Congregatione de Prop. Fide.
Con Licenza de' Superiori.

While propaganda itself is much older, as old as when humans first became acquainted by their reflections on a water surface.

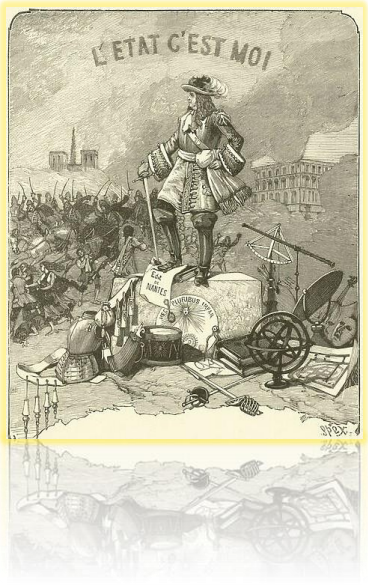
Perhaps the politician who took most advantage and understood the effects of propaganda was Julius Caesar himself. During his campaign against France (Gaul), Caeser use to send his runners to deliver his narrative to the Roman plebeians. These runners would themselves read aloud Caesar's writings in public areas. This allowed the illiterate citizens of Rome to hear firsthand accounts of the war. These accounts must have made Caesar appears quite the hero to the average citizen.

L'Etat, C'est Moi

In the old days rulers had the final word, as Louis XIV once stated **"L'Etat c'est moi", I am the state.** They changed the course of history by simply doing what they wanted.
In this modern day and age, rulers in a position of power can no longer do what they want without the approval of the masses, they found in propaganda a tool which is increasingly powerful in gaining that approval.
Perceiving the individual not only as a cell in the social organism, but as a cell organised into the social unit. Touch a nerve at a sensitive spot and you get an automatic response from certain specific members of

the organism.
Doesn't that remind you of the same concept all social media outlets algorithms are programmed to depict. Only for the pure purpose "of keeping their users entertained".

Propaganda is an equilibrium between science and art, for the influence of good or the manipulation of wickedness. It is scientific in the sense that it seeks to base its operations upon definite knowledge drawn from direct observation of the "group mind", and upon the application of principles which have been demonstrated to be consistent and relatively constant. Propaganda, like economics and sociology, can never be an exact science for the reason that its subject matter is dealing with the human element.
With new labels and different branches being established, the rise of better phraseology on the likes of Public Relations (PR) and Marketing has been the new popular toolset for commercial usage.
Pushing the narrative from " Please buy this Laptop" to "Please sell me this Laptop".



“Trotter and Le Bon concluded that the group mind does not think in the strict sense of the word.”

Wilfred Trotter in his book, Instincts of the Herd in War and Peace (1917), goes in-depth in what he labelled as the nature of the herd, expanding of Le Bon’s crowd theories. For Trotter, the herd was more than just a metaphor for social behaviour.

The Power of Words

During World War II in the UK, mobile or evacuation hospitals came under a significant amount of criticism, for the way in which they handled their patients. The common knowledge in the public mind was that hospitals provides prolonged and reliable attention to their patients. When the name was changed to evacuation posts instead of evacuation hospitals the negative reaction vanished quickly. No one expected more than an adequate emergency treatment from an institution so named. Humans are rarely aware of the real reasons which motivate their actions.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

From simple slogans and taglines like, We Can, I'm Lovin' It, Just Do It. Next time you watch your favourite show on Netflix check their "See what's next" slogan.
Words hold immense power, yet we often relegate them to the realm of everyday trivialities in our daily communications.

Our human capacity to break the mould and learn to adapt changes runs deep as our capacity for herd mentality. We are so accustomed to language that we barely take the time to critique or question its intentions.

Propagandist Techniques

I am going to discuss some basic techniques used in negative propaganda campaigns, in an effort to provide enough knowledge to counter these deceptive techniques and not to encourage them.

Name Calling is linking someone, something or even an idea to a negative symbol. **Glittering Generalities** is the reverse of **Name Calling**, using of positive wording and symbolism instead.
You see these two techniques used in election campaigns so often.

Transfer is a device by which the propagandist links the authority or prestige of something that is well respected and revered to something they would have us accept.
One of the great examples is when politician closes their speech with a prayer.

Testimonial is when a public figure or a celebrity promotes or endorses a product, a policy, or a political candidate.
You see this day in day out on TV and socials, where an athlete appears wearing a certain brand or a Kardashian talking about their latest and greatest perfume.

Plain Folks attempting to convince the audience that a prominent person "usually a politician" and their ideas are "of the people." Like when Bill Gates stands in front of McDonald's waiting his turn.

Bandwagon is the appeal that "everyone else is doing it, and so should you."

Fear plays on your deep-seated fears, warning the audience that disaster will result if they do not follow a particular course of action. Keep that in mind when you watch this insurance company advertisement.

Ryan Holiday in his great book, "Trust Me, I'm Lying: Confessions of a Media Manipulator", *the economics of the internet created a twisted set of incentives that make traffic more important, and more profitable than the truth.*

When propaganda objectives aren't centred on uncovering and sharing the truth, it becomes inherently negative, regardless of how it's dressed up or presented.

Fact Checking

There are many free tools under our disposal to fact check articles and information. I will list here few of the platforms I used and tested.

https://reporterslab.org
The Reporters' Lab is a center for journalism research in the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University.

https://fullfact.org
A UK organisation that provides a scope of free services for fact checking. Based on powerful Machine Learning (ML) that will analyses search including keywords and topics.

https://toolbox.google.com/factcheck
Even Google wants a piece of this . . .

https://www.logically.ai/
Is one of the new waves of startups, "not a free tool". They use similar techniques to FullFact but charge you money for it, stating them here to give you an idea on what is out there.

There are many other services and platforms out there, like the Allen Institute of Artificial Intelligence which built the Grover system to detect GPT generated text, and their SciFact which is a fact checker which was heavily used for fact checking medical claims related to Covid 19.

As I have mentioned, many fact checking platforms are powered by ML and AI. I want to discuss and explain a little about Google BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers), which

was developed based on ELMo (Embeddings from Language Models).

BERT learns via a contextual self-supervised mechanism. Started by reading a massive volume of words and as it did this, it used the preceding words to predict the next word and so on.
When you type a search phrase into your Google search engine, you are providing more than just a list of keywords to match. You are providing a grammatical snippet of text that Google's search algorithm requires to understand. BERT is the agent service that translates your search phrase into a collection of vectors that the search algorithm can then process quantitatively.

BERT was the reason that landed Google in trouble and revealed their true intentions regarding AI and the manipulation of data and information. It all started when they fired one of the most respected computer scientists Timnit Gebru unexpectedly. She was heading Google's Ethical Artificial Intelligence Team and was working on a research paper titled "On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big", regarding the danger from environmental costs and the dangers of deep learning languages and models like BERT being used as a supreme propagandist.

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